

YOUTH



Left: Pop idol Wang Yuan (middle) on the reality show *Mao Xue Woof* last year. **Center:** Singer-songwriter Mao Buyi (left) and entertainer Li Xueqin, both from Northeast China, are good friends and co-host the reality show. **Right:** Stand-up comedians Yang Meng'en (second from left) and Yang Li (third from left) have been invited to talk with the show's two hosts, Mao and Li, who foster a relaxing atmosphere.

Pickled vegetables, which add a unique tangy and savory flavor to dishes, are often used as a condiment or ingredient in Chinese cuisine. In recent years, the online phrase, "digital pickled vegetables", has been widely used by young people to describe the videos they often watch during mealtime. Generally, the content of such videos is geared toward everyday life and doesn't require much cognitive effort, making it easy to watch and enjoy.

Their relaxed style and pacing, and lack of gimmicks or dramatic conflicts, may help stimulate appetite, provides psychological comfort, and offers entertainment and relaxation.

For many viewers, especially those urban dwellers who live alone, such "digital pickled vegetables" can be consumed as a form of companionship during meals.

To echo this trend, many video producers have started creating entertaining programs that exhibit the aforementioned traits and have a duration comparable to the average time it takes to finish a meal.

Among them, Tencent Video, early in 2021, introduced a new concept of entertainment shows called *Xiao Xian Zong*, which roughly translates to "small-scale and lively reality shows".

With a relatively low production cost and flexible format, these shows offer a sense of companionship and connection to the audience, particularly to young people living fast-paced lifestyles in cities who may feel a lack of belonging.

And they would often be watched while people are eating or taking a break from their daily routines. The reality show, *Mao Xue Woof*, is the platform's first attempt at producing this genre.

Most reality shows are filmed in specially built studios, but *Mao Xue Woof* breaks from this convention by being set in a regular apartment located in a residential area in Beijing's Chaoyang district.

Bite-sized entertainment

Specially made, short-format reality shows are serving up staple mealtime companionship, **Xing Wen** reports.



Cross-talk performer Guo Qilin (middle) joins the hosts as a guest in the new season of the show, *Mao Xue Woof*. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Singer Mao Buyi, entertainer Li Xueqin, and their pug share this living space, hosting friends and engaging in casual conversations about personal experiences and relevant topics that young people are concerned about.

"Mao and Li are genuine friends," says Zhao Jianzhong, the show's producer. "That helps to create a certain atmosphere in which more natural and sponta-

neous conversations are more likely to occur. The unscripted show then evinces authenticity."

The two hosts are originally from Northeast China and have a strong personal connection.

Li would often visit Mao's place, and the two would sit on the sofa for hours, talking about various topics, sharing each other's worries and finding solu-

tions to problems together.

"Their real life bond inspired us to make the show," says Zhao.

So far, it has garnered a score of 7.3 out of 10 on the review site Douban.

"The show offers a glimpse into the everyday lives of young celebrities, revealing that they too experience struggles, emotional problems, and other challenges that are common to ordinary

people," comments one Douban user. "It reminds me that no one is exempt from the physical and mental challenges we face in life, regardless of fame or wealth. This realization gives me solace when I am dealing with similar stresses and afflictions."

According to Zhao, the show has now achieved a total number of views and unique visitors comparable to that of a feature-length video program.

He suggests that producing several shows of a similar genre and quality could serve as a critical foundation for retaining active users on Tencent's video-sharing platform.

The show's newest season aired recently, with each of its episodes, normally around 30 minutes long, being released once a week throughout the year.

"We plan to provide a long-term companion to our viewers," says Zhao.

The guests in the upcoming season include cross-talk performer Guo Qilin, actresses Zhou Yutong and Sun Yi, as well as stand-up comedians Hu Lan and Xu Zhisheng.

Qiu Yue, the deputy chief of Tencent's online video production department, predicts that reality shows based on genuine relationships among celebrities, and highly related to everyday life, will be a forthcoming trend in Asia's reality show production industry.

"Rather than making guest appearances on popular large-scale reality shows, celebrities are more inclined to star in smaller-scale shows with their actual friends in a more relaxed setting," she explains.

They plan to create additional small-scale, vibrant reality shows that center on four areas, namely, socializing, relationships, fashion trends and sports. This is expected to enable the platform to better engage with a wider group of young viewers.

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Young Chinese offer energy to collectibles market



Li Ruiqi, a staff member of China Guardian Auctions, works during an auction held last year by the company. She often shares her knowledge of collectibles on social media. XINHUA

Li Ruiqi, a 28-year-old staff member at an auction company, has been sharing her daily work experience and knowledge about collectibles on her WeChat channel since the end of last year. Her subscribers have continued to grow as more people, especially the younger generation, are eager to use the platform to learn about history and traditional culture.

"Hello, everyone, today I'll introduce you to the unique porcelain made in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) during the reign of Emperor Daoguang," says Li, who works at China Guardian Auctions.

The auction house held a themed exhibition showcasing such porcelain recently, drawing the attention of many antiques enthusiasts.

"We do our utmost to explore the cultural connotation behind these collectibles, whereby their value will

also be increased. When the audience see a collection, they will no longer just see an old object that looks beautiful. Instead, they will truly understand the important historical value behind it," says Li.

Nowadays, young Chinese are interested in learning about cultural relics, and professionals like Li are injecting new vitality into the collectibles market, contributing to the inheritance and protection of traditional culture.

Shao Tianhong, also an art market practitioner of the post-1990 generation, graduated from a British university and studied Chinese art history for her master's degree. Shao has been engaged in the auction market since graduation.

"I think young Chinese today have more opportunities to experience both Chinese and Western cultures,

and their aesthetic and artistic perceptions are different from their previous generations," Shao says.

Gan Xuejun, president of the Beijing Association of Auctioneers, says that auction promotes and publicizes traditional culture in the market, leads the public to recognize and attach more importance to the value of cultural relics through commercial activities, and improves people's awareness of protecting cultural relics and traditional artworks.

"Young Chinese serve as a new force connecting the past with the future," says Gan. "China's collectibles and artworks market will rely on them to further improve standardization, specialization and internationalization."

Nowadays, both auctioneers and traditional museums have stepped into the field of digital collectibles

development to appeal to more youngsters. They digitize their collectibles through original designs and sell them to consumers online, including music, animation, games and handmade figurines.

Last year, a traditional artworks auction company in the eastern Chinese city Nanjing launched nine digital collectibles based on painted and calligraphic cultural relics, with a total distribution of 45,000 items. They were sold out in two minutes, with a total sales volume of 2.7 million yuan (\$393,000). According to a report issued by iResearch, China's digital collectibles market reached 280 million yuan in 2021.

Shao says that protecting Chinese traditional culture through her work gives her "a great sense of achievement".

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